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CHAPTER 11

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE: REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE NORMAN CONQUEST

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This chapter proposes a new material approach to the Norman Conquest, which has often been defined by its documentary narrative and conceptualised as a singular event at a national scale. It is argued here that the Conquest should instead be understood as a process with distinct regional variations, which were profoundly affected by localised socio-cultural dynamics and material traditions. Focusing on case studies of churches, landscapes and commemoration drawn from northern England, this chapter shows how both Normans and natives used material culture to tap into regionally valued modes and places of power, and to position themselves in the eventual Anglo-Norman society that emerged. It demonstrates that material culture provides a much more complex and nuanced story of the process of conquest than the primarily antagonistic account told in the ~~historical sources~~, and highlights the necessity of regionally and locally contextualised archaeologies of 'national' and 'international' events.

The Norman Conquest is often considered the defining event of medieval English history. It marks the watershed between 'early' and 'late' medieval England, and its story tends to be generalised to the national scale. Yet the realities of the process of effecting the Conquest in the years after 1066 varied enormously throughout the country. H C Darby's *Domesday Geography of England* series (1952–67) demonstrates that regional and idiosyncratic landscapes, economies and populations were hallmarks of late 11th-century England, and even in the first decades of the 12th century, the law code of Henry I revealed a three-fold division of English law that was still attuned to the pre-Conquest regions of Wessex, Mercia and the Danelaw (Le Patourel 1971, 21). However, despite the recognition of these regional variations, they have not yet been sufficiently problematised; this is the aim of this chapter.

NORMAN CONQUESTS: SETTING THE REGIONAL AGENDA

William Kapelle's (1979) book *The Norman Conquest of the North* was one of the first works to take a specifically regional approach to the Conquest, and to argue that a region's historical context had significance for the ways in which the process unfolded.

Scholars long before Kapelle had acknowledged that the Norman Conquest appeared to be different in northern England (eg Bishop 1948; Stenton 1969; Le Patourel 1971; Wightman 1975), but the post-Conquest north had primarily been defined in terms of its rebellions against the Normans' newly installed earls in 1067 and 1069 (Williams 1995, 17, 27), and the king's reaction through the 'Harrying of the North' in 1069–70 (Kapelle 1979, 3; Williams 1995, 17, 27). The rebellions were often explained by simplistic characterisations of the region as conservative, impoverished, lawless and recalcitrant (Kapelle 1979, 3) – a stereotype which persisted well into the later Middle Ages and beyond (Pollard 1996, xi; 1997, 143). However, the realities of post-Conquest England were far more complex than a fractious, anti-Norman north set in opposition to a compliant and easily subjugated south. The men of Exeter revolted in 1068, and the Welsh borders, Devon and Cornwall, and the Fens all played host to major uprisings c1070 (Williams 1995, 16–18), while the men of Northumbria had rebelled against attempted impositions of centralised control by Wessex in 1065, before the Normans even arrived (Kapelle 1979, 96). Kapelle therefore argued that a better understanding of the Norman Conquest in the region required going beyond the post-Conquest rebellions and William's reaction to them, focusing on a closer examination of the decades both before and after 1066, and the distinctive character and history of the region (Kapelle 1979, 4, 191). His approach allowed the region and the northerners to be understood on their own terms, rather than as a hiccup on the inevitable road to a unified and homogeneous 'Norman England' (Jewell 1994, 22).

This chapter builds on the recognition by Kapelle of the significance of regional variations in the process of Conquest, and recent archaeological work on regional approaches to material culture (eg Hadley 2001; Liddiard 2005b; Stocker and Everson 2006). It considers both the centuries before 1066 and longer-term 12th-century developments, and it delves more deeply into the complex motivations and choices of actors and audiences. It draws particularly on evidence from churches and commemoration in the late 11th and early 12th centuries to explore a number of themes through the lens of material culture and landscape, and utilises case studies from northern England to highlight the necessity of locally and regionally contextualised interpretations. While the focus here is on the northern counties, the implications are much wider ranging, as the theoretical and methodological approach sets out themes which are applicable to studies of the Conquest throughout the country. The aim here is not to define a particular 'Norman Conquest of the north' that is set in opposition to the 'normal' Norman Conquest of everywhere else. A complete understanding of the period requires pursuing the many, various, and complex regional and even local 'Norman Conquests' that were the reality of the time.

Central to the discussion here is a conception of the Norman Conquest not as a monolithic 'event', but as a highly variable process by which an Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian society and material world became 'Anglo-Norman' – a process which necessarily takes us into the 12th century (Le Patourel 1971, 19; Liddiard 2005a, 14). I will also consider the multiplicity of identities that were significant during this period of transition, particularly among the social elite, and their relationship to landscape and material culture. How did status-based, cultural and regional identities co-exist, conflict, or mesh? Similarly, what was the role of material culture in effecting a socio-political

transition? How was religious patronage affected by the Conquest, and how was it used to negotiate change? How was the balance struck, as Ann Williams has put it, between 'remembering the past' and 'living in the present' in the late 11th and early 12th centuries (Williams 1995)? My approach also espouses the viewpoint that changes and continuities in material culture around the Norman Conquest did not just 'happen': objects, buildings and landscapes were deliberately manipulated in order to achieve desired personal and group outcomes, and communicate meaning to a range of audiences. Both change and continuity were the result of choices made by knowledgeable actors, whether they were native or Norman, elite or non-elite, ecclesiastical or lay (McClain 2015).

Few historical events have narratives as well-known as the Norman Conquest, and the commonly understood story has been dominated by what is known from documentary history. Traditionally, the Norman Conquest as a whole was characterised in primarily antagonistic terms between conquerors and conquered (Chibnall 1999, 19), although some historical scholarship has argued convincingly for amalgamation and negotiation alongside conflict (eg Short 1995; Williams 1995; Thomas 2003a). While other studies have introduced further complexity to the northern story as well (eg Thomas 1987; Fleming 1991; Palliser 1993; Dalton 1994), they have not replaced the dominant narrative of rebellion and retaliation in the region. Lurid contemporary accounts of rebellions and the Harrying have meant that terms like 'genocide' (Kapelle 1979, 3) and 'catastrophe' (Le Patourel 1971, 9) are never far removed from the story of the Normans in the north. Even comparatively recent scholarly accounts of the Conquest in the north still characterise it as a primarily militaristic and oppressive process (eg Palmer 1998), and popular media has perpetuated this view (eg Ibeji 2011).

On the whole, archaeologists have not yet had a major role to play in the debate on the Norman Conquest, or its research directions. The discipline has amassed a wealth of evidence for settlement and landscape, buildings and artefacts from the period, but, apart from a few notable exceptions (eg Liddiard 2000; Sykes 2007; Jervis 2013), archaeologists have been reluctant to expand our analyses of particular 11th- and 12th-century material culture into a wider, theoretically informed archaeological agenda addressing the Norman Conquest. Archaeology's disengagement has resulted in the perpetuation of narratives of the Conquest period which depend solely on the documentary record, and which are limited by their lack of reference to the material world. What is needed is the development of a material approach to the Norman Conquest that utilises the relevant evidence of the documentary record, but is not beholden to it for answers. In the Conquest period, scholars considering the material and landscape evidence have sometimes fallen into the quintessential 'handmaiden to history' role. Accordingly, particular patterns or lacunae in the late 11th-century material evidence have been explained by attributing them to the Norman Conquest generally or the impact of the Harrying of the North in particular, with little further analysis. These interpretations take as read that the Conquest and Harrying were not only as destructive and antagonistic as the chronicles suggest, but also assume that the fact that they happened at all can explain patterning in everything from settlement planning (Allerston 1970, 106), to monastic foundation (Harper-Bill 2002, 171), to commemorative practices (Saul 2009, 24). Rather than attempting to fit the archaeology of the 11th and 12th centuries to

documented events and the prevailing historical narrative, systematic and contextualised archaeological examinations of buildings, landscapes and material culture can help us to examine critically, and even rewrite, the story of the Normans, not only in the north, but in England as a whole.

CHURCHES AND LANDSCAPES IN NORTHERN ENGLAND

The following case studies consider the evidence from parochial churches and commemoration in Yorkshire in the late 11th and early 12th centuries. The case studies highlight how tracking investment in religious buildings and material culture, on both large and small scales, can give us detailed insight into the economic and political milieu of the north in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest, and provide a more nuanced gloss on the region than documentary evidence alone has allowed. Patronage of churches and funerary monuments was a fundamental component of lordship and a means of constructing political and social power in both England and Normandy from long before the Conquest period as well as after it (eg Bates 1982, 98; Stocker 2000, 180; Blair 2005, 323). As such, they are an excellent barometer for examining the establishment of lordly control and the negotiation of elite status and identity, both of which were highly contested processes in the post-Conquest period.

The northern landscape

The historical geography of northern England in the 11th and 12th centuries provides an essential backdrop for a consideration of the religious material culture of the region and the role it played in the process of Conquest. For this period, a considerable amount of information can be derived from the demographic, economic and tenurial data provided by Domesday Book. Domesday's records are, of course, only a snapshot of late 11th-century England, and comparisons must always be made with the inherent variability of the data from region to region in mind (Roffe 1990, 334). Nevertheless, the evidence that can be drawn from the survey is invaluable for giving us an overview of the economic and social character of the various regions of the country, and it also highlights key variations in land and people which may have had considerable bearing on the process of conquest and its material manifestations.

The landscape of northern England at the time of Domesday was generally characterised by a thin population density as well as low levels of agricultural production in comparison with other areas of the country. Darby calculates average population densities of less than 2.5 people per square mile, and 0.5–1 plough team per square mile, in comparison to as many as 20 people and 4–5 ploughs per square mile in parts of the midlands and East Anglia (Darby 1977, 91, 127). In many cases, it is recorded in 1086 that the land had the potential to support far more ploughs than were being used. This, alongside the sparse population, has been taken as an indicator of Conquest-related destruction or devaluation (Kappelle 1979, 162). However, this was not a consistent pattern across northern England. For example, many of the Yorkshire manors held by Hugh Fitz Baldric in 1086 appear to have been working at far beyond the nominal plough capacity of their lands, in some

cases even doubling the number of active ploughs and the value of the estates from 1066 (Wightman 1975, 69–70). The potential of the land to support more ploughs than were being used, as well as the economic successes of Hugh fitz Baldric and others, suggest that the agricultural capacity of northern lands was not necessarily behind the rest of the country in 1086, even if the ability to exploit it efficiently was less well developed.

The other characteristic of northern England's Domesday survey is the presence of numerous entries for land recorded as 'waste'. Darby's map demonstrates that the frequency and density of manors termed 'waste' was undoubtedly much higher in the north, as were apparently unpopulated villas (fig. 11.1). Traditionally, this pattern has been assumed to be the direct result of the Harrying of the North and its long aftermath (eg Stenton 1971, 605), based on the accounts of sources such as the chronicle of Simeon of Durham, which claimed that the Harrying left the region uninhabited between York and Durham, and uncultivated for nine years after (Stevenson 1987, 259). However, the work of W E Wightman (1975) and David Palliser (1993) has highlighted that there is much ambiguity in the meaning of 'waste' in Domesday Book, and both have questioned the long-assumed correlation between damage from the Harrying of the North and the prevalence of waste entries. While highly prevalent in Yorkshire, clearly 'waste' was not only a northern phenomenon. It appears in Domesday entries across the country to greater or lesser extents, and is also used to describe some 1066 manors, not those dated to 1086 (Faull and Stinson 1986, C35; Palliser 1993, 10). What 'waste' does seem to indicate reliably is the lack of value in specifically arable production. In many cases, 'waste' manors also seem to correlate with those that had reduced or non-existent populations, but it should be noted that the number of villagers and the number of ploughs are often directly connected in the Domesday recording process (eg five villeins with two ploughs). A lack of population on a waste manor may not be an indicator that no one was living in the villa at all, but rather that no one who lived in the villa was actively working the arable land.

While wasteland cannot be definitively correlated with destruction, its prevalence, together with the low population and plough teams, does seem to present a picture of relative agricultural poverty in the north in the late 11th century. An alternative view might be that the processes of settlement and of bringing the landscape into full use were still in progress at the time of Domesday (Wightman 1975, 56). Palliser suggests that a lack of extensive administrative control may be at the root of much of the 'waste' and low values in the northern counties. If the lord was unable to collect rent, then the manor could not be valued. Waste may well have been a technical designation of the value of the manor to its lord, rather than a characterisation of the state of its land (Palliser 1993, 13). Wightman also makes this contention, given that some manors saw a substantial drop in value from 1066 to 1086, yet the number of ploughs was at or near the land's assessed potential (Wightman 1975, 62–63). For example, at Hemingbrough (East Riding of Yorkshire) in 1066 there was land for two ploughs, and in 1086 the manor was owned by the king and two ploughs were being worked. However, the value of the manor had dropped from 40s to 16s (Faull and Stinson 1986, 1Y5). As it seems that the amount of land that *could* be cultivated *was* being cultivated, the lack of administrative control and management 'on the ground' in the manor, and perhaps simply the information that came with it, may have been the primary driver behind falling values.

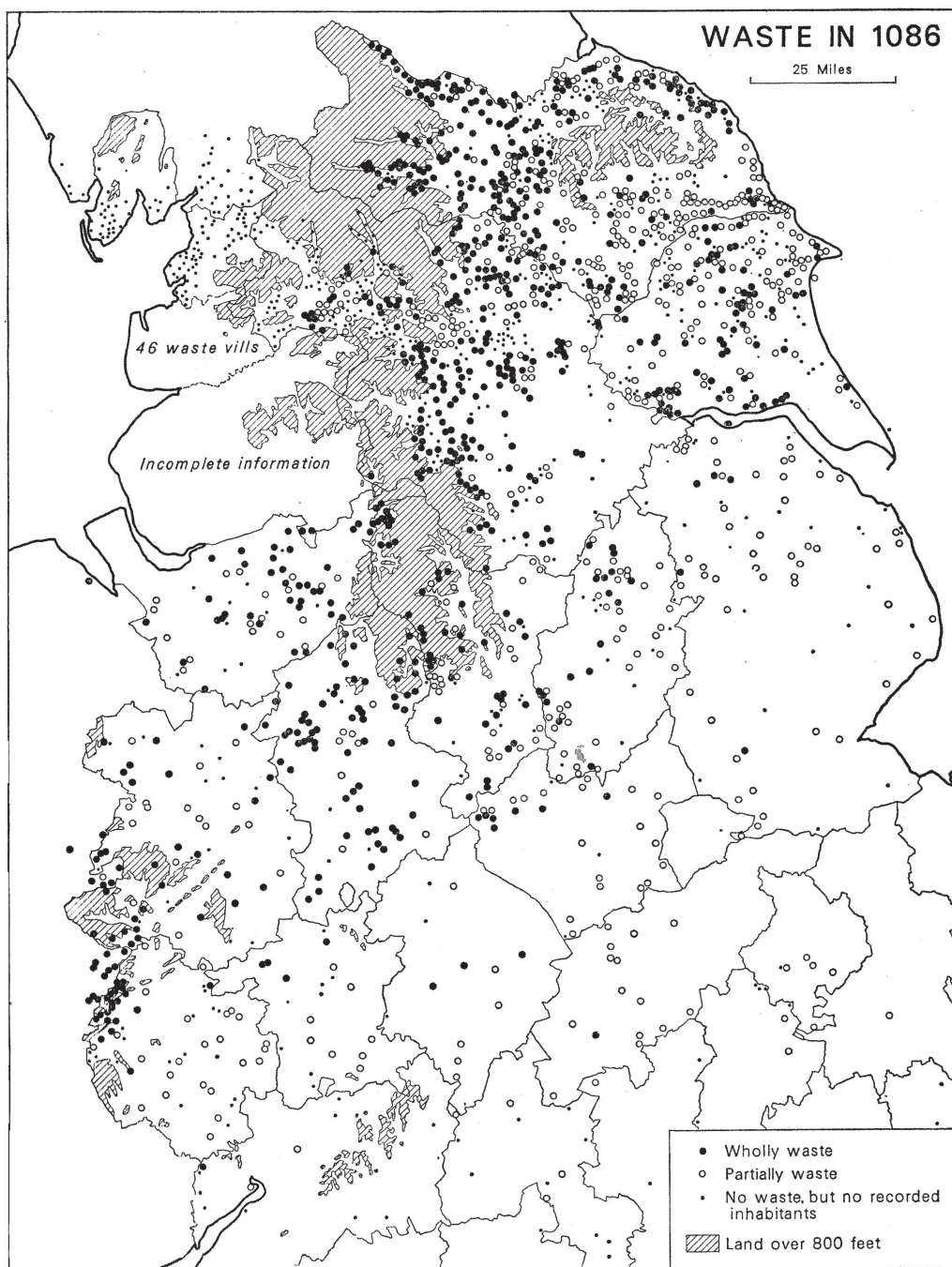


FIG. 11.1 Map of Domesday lands recorded as 'waste' in 1086 (Darby 1977, 249; fig. 83)
Reproduced courtesy of Cambridge University Press.

In contrast to the apparently impoverished and underdeveloped picture of manorial life in northern England presented by the financial snapshot in Domesday Book, mapping evidence for expenditure in parish churches in the late 11th century presents a picture of the north in much ruder health than the Domesday statistics might lead us to believe. This map (fig. 11.2) of the North Riding of Yorkshire indicates parochial churches that were likely to not only be in existence in the decades leading up to 1100, but which were also in active use by the community and receiving investment from patrons. The data are compiled from Domesday entries which record the presence of a church (in which churches seem to be consistently recorded only if they have manorial value), and surviving 'Saxo-Norman' architectural fabric and stone commemorative sculpture dating to c1050–1100. Generally, it appears that most areas of the North Riding were seeing expenditure on their parochial churches at this time, with expected gaps over the highlands of the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales, where there was a paucity of Domesday vills (Maxwell 1962, 100). There are only a few areas in which we might expect to see patronage but where it is lacking, such as in the northern part of the central Vale of York (see the section titled 'The northern Vale of York'). The map (fig. 11.2) represents the minimum number of parochial churches in active use at the time, bearing in mind that we have undoubtedly experienced losses of architectural and sculptural evidence of the period because later medieval building and commemorative programmes often led to the destruction or rebuilding of earlier structures. The prevalence of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian evidence across the region, indicating the presence of a church by the 10th century in more than one-third of



FIG. 11.2 Evidence for local churches in the North Riding of Yorkshire, c1050–1100. Compiled from Domesday Book records of churches and surviving architectural and commemorative material.

the county's parishes, makes it very likely that the pattern of extant local churches c.1100 was even more dense and widespread than pictured here.

The north of England may have been impoverished in comparison to some of the more arable-intensive regions of the country, but the evidence of early post-Conquest parochial patronage in the North Riding of Yorkshire, where the documentary record suggests that the Harrying of the North was supposedly particularly intense (Palliser 1993, 3–4), demonstrates that it was far from a wasteland. The region's patrons had expendable wealth which they were choosing to deploy in parish churches, probably as part of a comprehensive programme of manorial development. The following examples probe these distributions in further detail, exploring how the changing political and economic climate in the late 11th century might have affected churches and patronage, and how the northern elite strategically used ecclesiastical expenditure to manage the post-Conquest transition.

The northern Vale of York

The first case study is taken from a compact group of 23 parishes and chapelries around Northallerton in the northern Vale of York (colour plate 16 and Fig. 11.3). In this locality, the four parishes of Croft, Danby Wiske, Northallerton and Ingleby Arncliffe feature pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon sculpture. A total of 10 churches in the area have sculptural evidence from the Anglo-Scandinavian period, which suggests the foundation of at least seven new churches in the area in the late 9th and 10th centuries, as well as the continuation of patronage at Croft, Northallerton and Ingleby Arncliffe. The sculpture implies that more than half of the churches in the area, if not more, were established by the 10th century. However, despite this strong legacy of pre-Conquest church patronage, there is little evidence for investment in the area's churches in the late 11th century. Domesday Book mentions a church at Ainderby Steeple in 1086, but there is no evidence of Saxo-Norman sculpture in the area and only two instances of late 11th-century architecture. The early Norman tympanum at Danby Wiske and the long-and-short nave quoins at Sockburn are the only standing architecture in the area from the period. Early 20th-century excavations at Sockburn also revealed a small, pre-12th-century chancel and nave foundations (Page 1914, 453).

The region's land seems to have been as favourable to settlement as that in any part of the Vale of York, and the Domesday densities of plough lands and teams in the area were both average to high compared with the rest of the riding (Maxwell 1962, 109, 115). The small sizes of the parishes and chapelries in the area are also indicative of relatively high population density and productive land, further emphasising the likelihood of heavy settlement, manorialisation and agricultural exploitation in the area at the time the parishes were formed (Harvey and Payne 1973; Pounds 2000, 86). Furthermore, Northallerton was an extensive and wealthy manor held by the earl of Northumbria in the pre-Conquest period, and the nearby church at Brompton appears to have housed a workshop producing high-quality hogback sculpture in the 10th century (Page 1914, 418; Lang 2001, 47). Churches clearly existed in the area and were well distributed by the 10th century, and there is almost certainly continuity of site between these early churches and their late medieval successors, because all of the pre-Conquest sculpture is found displayed in or incorporated into the current churches. The clear importance of many of the sites in the

FIG. 11.3 Material evidence by date for parishes in the northern Vale of York

Parish/manor	1066 holder(s)	1086 overlord	1086 subtenant	Value 1066	Value 1086	Waste 1086
Northallerton	Earl Edwin	King		£80	0	Y
Brompton	Bishop of Durham	Bishop of Durham		40s	0	Y
Kirby Sigston	Earl Edwin	King		Incl N'ton	Incl N'ton	Y
Great Smeaton	Earl Edwin/Madalgrim	King/Count Alan		Incl N'ton/ Not recorded	Incl N'ton/ Not recorded	Y
East Cowton	Thorketill/Earl Edwin	King /Count Alan	None/Landric	20s	0	Y
Ainderby Steeple	Thorketill, Ulfketill/ Earl Edwin	King/Count Alan	None/Asketill	Soke N'ton/ 20s	Soke N'ton/8s	Y (King's land only)
West Rounton	Leot	King	(Roger Conyers c. 1100)	Soke N'ton	Soke N'ton	Y
Birkby	Earl Edwin	King		Incl N'ton	Incl N'ton	Y
Hutton Bonville	Three thegns	King		20s	Not recorded	
Osmotherley	Ligulf, Eilaf	King (Bishop of Durham c1087)		Not recorded	Not recorded	
Welbury	Frithgestr, Maelmaedhog	King (Robert Brus c1106)		Not recorded	Not recorded	
East Harlsey	Madalgrim	King		20s	Not recorded	
High Worsall	Halldor, Alsige	Bishop of Durham		Not recorded	Not recorded	
Deighton	Bishop of Durham	King (Robert Brus c1106)		20s	0	Y
Ingleby Arncliffe	Madalgrim	King (Robert Brus c1106)		20s	Not recorded	
Appleton Wiske	Orm	King (Robert Brus c1106)		20s	Not recorded	
Danby Wiske	Kofsi	Count Alan	Landric	40s	10s	

(Continued)

FIG. 11.3 (Continued)

Parish/manor	1066 holder(s)	1086 overlord	1086 subtenant	Value 1066	Value 1086	Waste 1086
South Cowton	Earl Edwin	Count Alan	Godric the Steward	Not recorded (Incl Gilling W)	Not recorded (Incl Gilling W)	
Croft	Lost (Tor?)	Count Alan	Enisant	40s	0	Y
Eryholme	Earl Edwin			Not recorded (Incl Gilling W)	Not recorded (Incl Gilling W)	Y
Sockburn	Not recorded	Bishop of Durham	(Roger Conyers c. 1100)	Not recorded	Not recorded	
Great Langton	Thorfinn (soke), Finghall, Thorr	Count Alan	Bodin, Herewig	22s	0	Y
Yafforth	Earl Edwin/Gospatric	King/Count Alan	None/Landric	Not recorded (Incl N'ton and Ellerton)	Not recorded (Incl N'ton and Ellerton)	Y (King's land only)

pre-Conquest period, and the strong likelihood that they still existed in the late 11th century, makes the lack of 11th-century documentary and architectural evidence particularly puzzling. Why, if the land was good for farming and favourable for settlements, is there very little evidence for patronage of churches and commemoration in the northern Vale of York?

By comparing the provision of churches with the circumstances of tenure and population in the region c1086, possible explanations arise (fig. 11.4). Domesday Book records that many of the settlements in these parishes were wholly waste in 1086, having neither value nor apparently population worth recording (Maxwell 1962, 146). In many cases, the value of the individual manors had dropped from 20s or 40s to zero between 1066 and 1086, and in the case of the extensive manor and soke of Northallerton, to which many of these parishes belonged, the drop in value was staggering. In 1066, the estate of

FIG. 11.4 Evidence from Domesday Book for manors in the northern Vale of York

Parish/manor	Pre-Viking Evidence	Anglo-Scandinavian evidence	Late 11th-century evidence	12th-century evidence
Northallerton	✓	✓		✓
Brompton		✓		✓
Kirby Sigston		✓		✓
Great Smeaton				✓
East Cowton				✓
Ainderby Steeple			✓	✓
West Rounton				✓
Birkby		✓		
Hutton Bonville				
Osmotherley		✓		✓
Welbury		✓		✓
East Harlsey				✓
High Worsall				
Deighton				
Ingleby Arncliffe	✓	✓		✓
Appleton Wiske				✓
Danby Wiske	✓		✓	✓
South Cowton				
Croft	✓	✓		✓
Eryholme		✓		✓
Sockburn		✓		✓
Great Langton				✓
Yafforth				✓

Northallerton was held by Earl Edwin of Northumbria, when the demesne was worth £80 and had 66 villeins in residence, and 116 sokemen were recorded as holding on the manor's outlying lands. These sokelands included Birkby, Brompton, Kirkby Sigston and Osmotherley, all of which, alongside Northallerton itself, feature Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture. The 1066 wealth of the estate and its dense population correlate well with the area's prevalent Anglo-Scandinavian commemorative evidence. But by 1086, Edwin had been killed, the demesne and soke were held directly by the king, and both were wholly waste. Wightman remarks that Northallerton's wholesale transformation before and after 1066 is an enigma – it is not near other concentrated areas of wasteland explained by topography or limited settlement, nor was it in an area subject to afforestation or manorial reorganisation which might have generated administrative uses of 'waste' in other parts of the county (Wightman 1975, 70). It is impossible to say whether this drastic decline was a direct result of targeted harrying or suppression by the Normans in the area, but Northallerton was one of Earl Edwin's chief manors, and the fact that William was building a castle there c1070 suggests that the area could have been heavily involved in Edwin and Morcar's 1068 rebellion and William's suppression of it (Page 1914, 418).

If there were extant churches in the settlements of the northern Vale of York in 1086, as seems likely, they may have been omitted by Domesday Book because most of the manors themselves, and thus their churches, had no taxable value. Likewise, the area may have lacked ecclesiastical expenditure in the 11th century because, regardless of any theoretical damage from harrying, agricultural exploitation was at a low point. In this situation, the disposable resources needed to contribute to a church rebuilding would be scarce, and as most of the land was held directly by the king and not tenanted, there was a dearth of potential patrons in the area. Nobody present saw the immediate need for – or social benefit of – spending money on churches in an economically depressed area. It is almost certainly no coincidence that the two manors in the northern Vale of York which had both value in 1086 and a subtenant in place, Ainderby Steeple and Danby Wiske, also had a church mentioned in Domesday or material evidence from the late 11th century. Sockburn, while not recorded in Domesday because it was partially in Co Durham, was known to be property of the Bishop of Durham before and after the Conquest, and Roger de Conyers was enfeoffed there by at least 1100 (Page 1914, 450). In these locations, in contrast to the land in the area held by the king and which was not subinfeudated, there was likely to have been someone of elite status 'on the ground' who held a compelling interest in the revitalisation of the manor and its church.

The apparent decline seen in the late 11th century in the northern Vale of York does not appear to have been prolonged. Evidence from architecture, commemoration and fonts demonstrates that the renewal of the area's churches was well on its way by the mid-12th century, when patronage in local churches was being carried out at a rate commensurate with the rest of the North Riding. Not long after the Domesday survey, William Rufus granted the entire estate of Northallerton to the Bishop of Durham, and Robert de Brus was granted a number of manors in the decade after 1100. It is possible that the change in fortunes in the northern Vale of York's churches seen after 1100 was tied to subsequent subinfeudation of their manors by Robert and the bishop, and the creation of a tenurial situation that nurtured manorial investment and competitive display amongst the lesser landowners.

The Honour of Richmond

A sharp contrast to the situation in the northern Vale of York can be seen in the western part of the North Riding, in a region known after the Conquest as the Honour of Richmond, held by Count Alan Rufus. Here, there are significant numbers of churches and commemorative monuments dating to c1050–1100, allowing us to [sig](#) rewrite traditional interpretations of the early post-Conquest period in western Yorkshire (colour plate 17 and fig. 11.5). It has often been thought by historians that bringing the western reaches of Yorkshire under control after the Conquest was particularly problematic, due to banditry based in the wild, hilly region. The supposedly lawless character of the area, combined with the high number of Domesday ‘waste’ manors (almost half of the manors in the Honour of Richmond were whole or partially waste), has led to the interpretation that the Harrying was particularly severe there, or at least that its economic impact was longer lasting (Maxwell 1962, 145–147; Kapelle 1979, 114, 164–165).

FIG. 11.5 Parishes in the Honour of Richmond with either Domesday Book or material evidence, c1050–1100

Parish	1086 tenant	1086 value	DB church	Architecture	Commemoration
Romaldkirk	Bodin	waste		✓	✓
Bowes	Not in DB				✓
Startforth	Enisant and Bodin	waste (‘Except for a church’)	✓		
Barningham	Enisant	waste			✓
Kirkby Ravensworth	Bodin	30s	✓		
Forcett	None (Wymar Steward in 11th c.)	waste			✓
Stanwick	Enisant	12s			✓
Manfield	3 freemen	partial waste	✓		
Croft	Enisant	waste		✓	
Sockburn	Not in DB			✓	
Melsonby	Bodin	30s	✓		
Middleton Tyas	Uhtred	20s			✓
Gilling West	None	waste		✓	
Richmond	Enisant	16s	✓		
Catterick	None	£8	✓		
Grinton	Bodin	waste		✓	

(Continued)

FIG. 11.5 (Continued)

Parish	1086 tenant	1086 value	DB church	Architecture	Commemoration
Danby Wiske	Landric	10s		✓	
Ainderby Steeple	Anchitil	8s	✓		
Hornby	Gospatric	waste		✓	
East Hauxwell	Ribald	20s		✓	
Kirkby Fleetham	Odo	40s	✓		
Spennithorne	Ribald	16s	✓		
Thornton Steward	Gospatric	20s	✓		
Kirklington	Robert	16s		✓	
Patrick Brompton	Three knights	46s		✓	
Bedale	Bodin	30s	✓	✓	
Well	Bjornulfr	60s	✓		
Masham	Ernegis	16s	✓	✓	
West Tanfield	None	10s		✓	
Wath	None	waste		✓	

As a means of controlling these regions, William granted compact lordships to some of his chief barons, in which a number of disparately held estates were gathered together into a contiguous grouping of manors, allowing the magnate to concentrate his power and more easily defend his lands and manage his knights (Lennard 1959, 31; Wightman 1975, 55; Dalton 1994, 33, 117). These compact lordships were more common in northern England than elsewhere, and were in contrast to the post-Conquest honours made up of hundreds of manors scattered widely across the country. There were a number of compact lordships in Yorkshire, including the Honour of Richmond in the North Riding, held by Count Alan of Brittany, and Tickhill and Pontefract in the West Riding, held by Roger de Busli and Ilbert de Lacy. Paul Dalton (1994, 21) has proposed that one of the consequences of attempting to gain control over the region quickly was that the Normans were obliged to let many of Yorkshire's pre-Conquest lords remain landholders, although they were pushed down the tenurial hierarchy. Indeed, in 1069 William greeted 'in a friendly fashion, all my thegns in Yorkshire, both English and French' (Townend 2014, 217). This strategy is borne out in the Domesday records, where Yorkshire features a higher number of native subtenants than many other counties (Finn 1972, 27; Fleming 1991, 178). Ilbert de Lacy and Count Alan's subtenants bear names like Godwine, Gospatric, Thor, Alric, Ulfketill and Uhtred, as well as Norman names (Faull and Stinson 1986, 9Wiff, 6Niff). In many cases, the minimal change in the landholdings of native lords is very clear. In Upper Hopton, West Riding, Alric had two carucates of land in 1066, and in 1086, 'the same man' held the manor, although now he was the subtenant of Ilbert de Lacy. The pre-Conquest holder Godwine found himself in the same situation on Ilbert's manor at Huddersfield, while in the Honour of Richmond, Gospatric's holdings displayed a high degree of continuity, as he retained a great number of manors that both he and his father

Arnketill had held in 1066, although in 1086 he held them from Count Alan (Faull and Stinson 1986, 9W108–109, 6N72, 79; Thomas 2003b, 312). However, there were also a number of native lords in Domesday who held land as subtenants after the Conquest that they had not held in 1066, demonstrating that these were not merely landholders who had ‘hung on’ through the Conquest, but also natives who may have been deliberately aligning themselves with the new regime and benefitting from the process of Conquest by acquiring new land (Thomas 2003b, 314).

In terms of the Domesday landscape, the Honour of Richmond is an area of contrasts, featuring both the lowest and highest population and plough densities in the North Riding (fig. 11.6). The lowest densities lie in the Pennine highlands and the Yorkshire Dales, and the highest occur in the eastern-central reaches of the Honour, around the settlements of Catterick, Richmond, Bedale and Wensley. Wasteland was also minimal in this area, compared to the western Dales, producing an interesting pocket of prosperity which cannot be fully explained by topography (Maxwell 1962, 109, 121). This mixed patterning is reflected in the levels of church building in the region in the late 11th century. A total of 30 churches in the Honour have been identified from Domesday, sculptural and architectural evidence, resulting in a clear pattern of patronage across all but the high Pennines/Dales zones. But the areas of supposed prosperity and church patronage are not all directly correlated. Parishes outside the area of high arable production and population feature churches as well, and some ‘waste’ manors in 1086 have evidence of broadly contemporary, or slightly later, ecclesiastical material culture.

The proliferation of church patronage in large parts of the Honour of Richmond during the late 11th century seems to contradict narratives of a lack of control, as well as the assumed severity of the Harrying of the North in the area. As church patronage is most likely to have been the work of the landholding elite, the number of churches established in the honour by the early years of the 12th century would seem to indicate extensive Norman control over the western North Riding by that time. That is not to say, however, that the region was not difficult to manage or that there were no rebellious tendencies. That was almost certainly the reasoning behind the creation of Count Alan’s compact lordship and the extensive levels of subinfeudation, as the Normans needed manorial authority present and on site to ensure the effectiveness of the Conquest. The difficulty of managing the region may even have been one of the reasons for investment in churches soon after the Conquest. In a tenuously controlled landscape, it was likely beneficial to establish concrete symbols of lordship, wealth and power as soon as possible.

The enfeoffment of native lords in the Honour demonstrates that if there was ever an ideal of total Norman ethnic dominance in post-Conquest landholding, it was quickly compromised by practicalities and political expediency (Chibnall 1999, 87; Thomas 2003b, 309). Native landholders were forced into similar compromises concerning ethnicity. In order to retain land and their social station after the Conquest, engaging with Norman ideals of lordship necessarily took precedence over ethnic or cultural allegiances. Churches were built on manors held by both native and Norman subtenants during the late 11th century and early 12th centuries. Although the dating of architecture and commemorative sculpture is too imprecise to tie directly to a particular Domesday lord, some of this ecclesiastical expenditure was undoubtedly being carried out by native subtenants, who held equivalent tenurial status with Norman knights. But

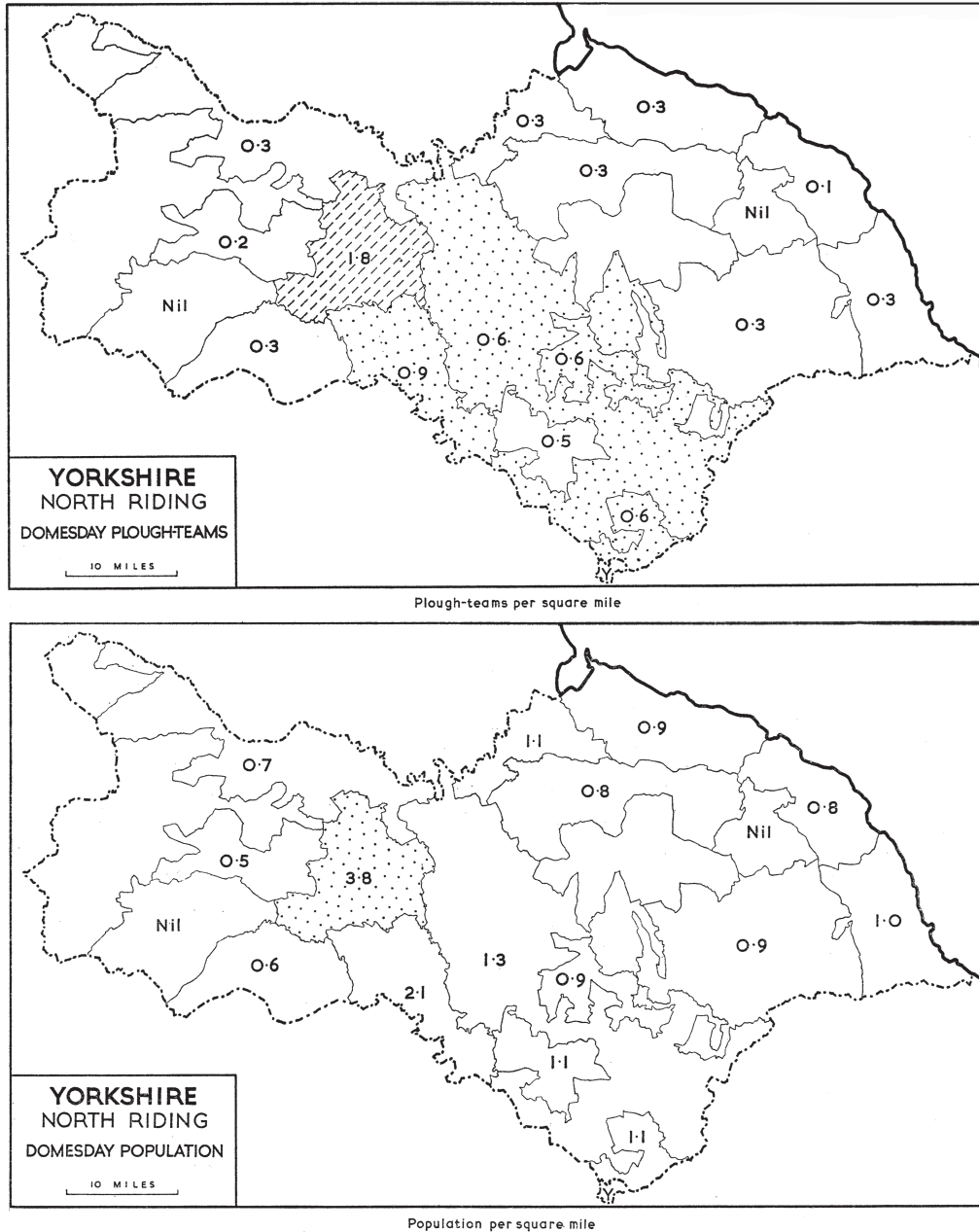


FIG. 11.6 Population and plough-team densities in the North Riding of Yorkshire in 1086 (Maxwell 1962, 115, 121; figs 28, 30) Reproduced courtesy of Cambridge University Press.

even if the lords carrying out the building or commemoration programmes were ethnically native, their churches and manorial developments would have been supportive of the Norman hierarchical framework of which they had become a part. For native subtenants and their families, patronising churches and commemorative monuments was an effective way of showing their overlords, and their peers, that they belonged in the new social structure.

In both the northern Vale of York and the Honour of Richmond, the extent of subinfeudation was integral to the fortunes of churches. By the time of Domesday, the Honour of Richmond was already heavily subinfeudated compared to the rest of the county, and was particularly far advanced when compared to the northern Vale of York, which mainly lay untenanted and in the king's hands (Dalton 1994, 44). Count Alan had enfeoffed at least 28 separate manorial lords by 1086, and over 60% of the Honour of Richmond's lands were subtenanted at Domesday (Dalton 1994, 300–302). Danby Wiske and Ainderby Steeple, although geographically a part of the northern Vale of York, fell within the Honour of Richmond in terms of tenure, and their material evidence is notably more aligned with the latter. There, expenditure on church building and commemoration seems to have been prioritised consistently in the decades after the Conquest, without the lacuna seen in much of the northern Vale of York. The archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates that the installation of minor elite lordship at manorial level, and the attendant social motivations of these post-Conquest landholders, had more to do with 11th-century economic prosperity and consumption of material culture than either simple geography or any supposed impact of the Harrying of the North. Even in an area where many of the manors were recorded as waste in 1086, and where the Harrying had supposedly been severe, the presence of interested patrons who had direct control over the day-to-day life of the estate and compelling social interests in the locality and region had far more impact on levels of ecclesiastical patronage than did poor arable land, lasting damage from the Conquest, or concerns about holding on to 'native' or 'Norman' ethnic identities.

Commemorative practice

Following on from the two detailed studies of churches and landscapes, this final case study considers patterns of commemorative evidence in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, and how the development of grave monuments in the north reveals the negotiation of present and past that was required for the effective implementation of the Conquest. The map in colour plate 18 breaks down the distribution of material evidence for the Saxo-Norman period in the North Riding of Yorkshire (colour plate 18). When taken together, the material evidence has a fairly uniform distribution across the whole of the North Riding, but it is clear that church building and monument commission in this period were spatially clustered, with most early commemorative evidence being found in the northern reaches of the riding. However, this spatial coherence is not likely to indicate schools of production or sculptural workshops distributing monuments within a subregion. There are only 35 pieces of commemorative sculpture found at 24 different churches,

and the monuments themselves are highly diverse and idiosyncratic. While there are occasionally similar groups of monuments at a single church suggesting the same local sculptor (eg Forcett, North Riding), they do not tend to spread further afield than that. This pattern is replicated across all of the northern counties, with 11th- and early 12th-century work tending to be the least cohesive in terms of consistent styles and forms (cf Ryder 1985, 69, 87; 1991, 9; 2005, 52).

Excavations beneath the south transept of the Norman York Minster discovered an Anglo-Scandinavian graveyard in which 10th-century monuments in the style of the York Minster School had been reused on burials stratigraphically dated to the 11th century (Lang 1991, 26). This evidence, alongside a lack of 11th-century monumental styles and the frequent incorporation of 10th-century monuments into the fabric of later 11th-century churches, indicates that the major workshops of the Anglo-Scandinavian period had ceased production by the time of the Conquest (Lang 1991, 44). Nevertheless, the monumental evidence from rural northern England indicates that commemorative sculpture was still being produced in the late 11th century, probably by individual sculptors, and it is this industry that carried on through the period of Conquest in the north. In contrast to the modes of production of both Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, which were largely organised around regionally distributing workshops focused on important churches (Lang 2001, 44, 49), monumental production in the north of England during the 11th and early 12th centuries was clearly localised and operating on a much smaller scale.

The decentralised nature of production is further attested by the presence of 'transitional'-style monuments which are found throughout Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland. These monuments deliberately espoused forms or motifs from the pre-Conquest era and blended them with new Romanesque styles or the 'cross slab' monument type, which became the dominant non-effigial commemorative form in the late medieval north (fig. 11.7). Some transitional monuments retained the standing cross form of pre-Conquest markers, while others incorporated interlace, or replaced the standard locations of interlace on pre-Conquest monuments (eg on either side of the cross shaft) with Romanesque chevron or diaper-work. The presence of these hybrid styles demonstrates that pre-Conquest forms and stylistic tropes retained currency and meaning even after the ascendancy of the Normans.

Due to the ubiquity of cross slabs in the North, few comprehensive surveys of cross-slab monuments have been carried out in other areas of the country, although Jon Finch's (2000) study of Norfolk monuments and Lawrence Butler's (1965) examination of monuments from the East Midlands both provide useful counterpoints to analyses of the northern evidence. In Norfolk, the cross-slab sculptural tradition appears to spring forth fully formed after the Norman Conquest, primarily supplied with products from the workshop attached to the Barnack (Northamptonshire) quarries, which were produced from the first quarter of the 12th century. There are no apparent earlier cross-slab monuments, nor any transition from the sculpture of the pre-Conquest period. However, there was also no strong tradition of commemorative stone carving in East Anglia prior to the Norman Conquest.

In the East Midlands, the picture is slightly more complex. There are fully fledged workshop products from Barnack and ~~Purbeck~~, but also free-standing crosses of c.1100

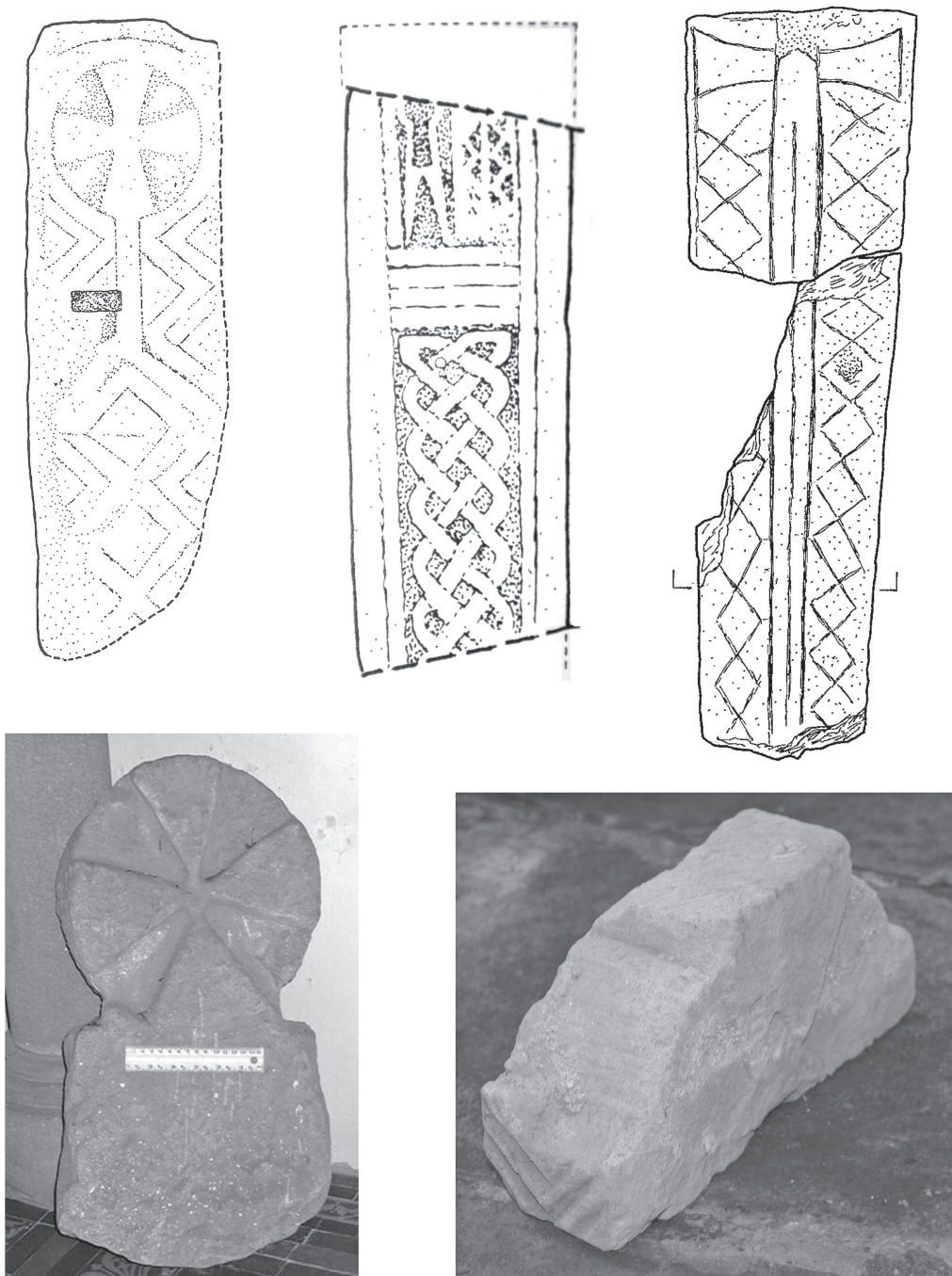


FIG. 11.7 'Transitional'-style monuments of the late 11th and early 12th centuries. Clockwise from top left: Gainford, High Coniscliffe (both Co Durham), Kildale, Fylingdales and Barningham (all Yorkshire) (all drawings by Peter F Ryder).

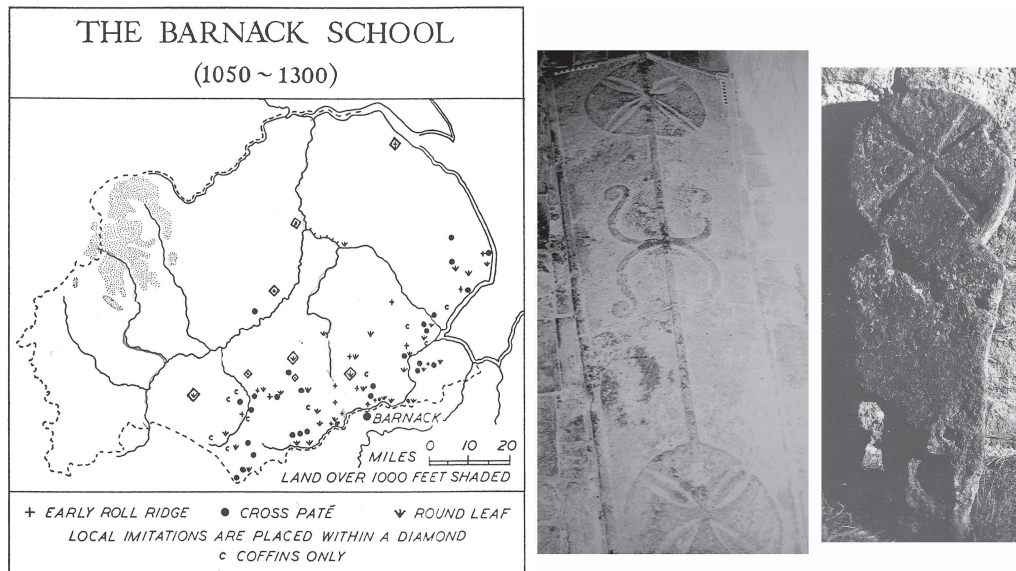


FIG. 11.8 From left: Map of Barnack product distribution in the late 11th and early 12th centuries in the East Midlands (Butler 1965, 115) (map by Lawrence Butler, reproduced courtesy of the Royal Archaeological Institute). Barnack slab, early 12th century (South Creak, Norfolk) (Finch 2000, 31) (photography by Jonathan Finch). Transitional-style standing cross, late 11th or early 12th century (Cabourne, Lincolnshire) (Everson and Stocker 1999, Ill. 396) (copyright Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture; photographers P Everson and D Stocker).

from Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, which are very reminiscent of pre-Conquest forms (Butler 1965, 115; Everson and Stocker 1999, 89–90) (fig. 11.8). Butler's regional study is particularly informative in that it encompasses places where there was a strong Anglo-Scandinavian pre-Conquest sculptural tradition (Lincolnshire and Derbyshire), but also areas in which there was not (Rutland and Leicestershire). The Barnack workshop, while it had quite a wide distribution across East Anglia and the East Midlands, does not seem to have infiltrated into areas where there was a strong pre-existing sculptural tradition. Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire do not display evidence of Barnack work, while Leicestershire and Rutland are very well served by the workshop. Lincolnshire's Barnack work is limited to the area around the Wash and Fens, which would have had the same lack of freestone as East Anglia (Butler 1965, 123). Locally produced copies of Barnack-style slabs in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and northern Leicestershire also attest to the decentralised nature of production in these areas during the late-11th and 12th centuries. These patterns suggest that, perhaps in a similar manner to those in northern England, sculptors in areas where pre-Conquest traditions were well established accommodated the transition by adapting old styles and incorporating new ones, or even

copying currently circulating styles, without requiring recourse to the products of the post-Conquest sculptural workshops.

As with the evidence from churches, commemorative patronage in the early post-Conquest period was driven by local and regional exigencies, rather than a 'Norman' narrative played out on a national scale. Patrons, in the north and beyond, clearly responded to the pre-Conquest character and traditions of the regions in which they established themselves. Sculptors carved 'transitional'-style monuments and patrons may well have requested them, perhaps as a way of reconciling the multiplicity of identities that the post-Conquest social context had generated. By acknowledging and actively perpetuating understood and valued regional styles as well as incorporating socially influential Romanesque elements and new cross-slab forms in their patronage, both Norman and native patrons participated together in constructing a northern regional identity that embodied the necessary balance between remembering the past and living in the present.

CONCLUSIONS: NEW NARRATIVES OF CONQUEST

This chapter has clearly demonstrated that material culture, especially beyond the castles and cathedrals which have been the usual focus, not only adds to the story of the Normans in England, but also rewrites it substantially. The local churches and grave monuments of northern England reveal that the popular narrative of documentary history alone is insufficient to understand the subtleties of the process of Conquest. In reality, the region was characterised as much, or more, by amalgamation and necessary compromise, by both Normans and natives, as by conflict and imposition. The post-Conquest period may well have been a 'catastrophe' for some in northern England, but it was also a period of intense manorial investment and a considerable amount of conspicuous consumption at the manorial level, both by Normans and natives. Viewed as a whole, the post-Conquest north may have been comparatively sparsely populated and emerging in terms of agricultural productivity, but it was not uniformly impoverished. When manorial lordship was in place, the region's well-established cohort of local churches became hotbeds of patronage and elite expenditure, and there were areas of remarkable vitality and resilience as well as areas where control and management were still a work in progress.

It has been recognised that spaces and places are 'actively involved in the constitution and construction of social identities' (Savage 1996, 69), and that material culture was a key component of local and regional identities (Berry 2002). This was undoubtedly true in northern England in the post-Conquest period, where a regional Anglo-Norman identity began to grow out of a shared understanding of and familiarity with the manorial and agrarian landscape, the locations and legacies of church buildings and sites of power, past and present forms of commemoration, and modes of production. The realities of post-Conquest life in the region, for both conquerors and conquered, helped define what it meant to be 'northern' in medieval society. The construction of a northern consciousness, which coalesced through the Middle Ages (Jewell 1994; Appleby and Dalton 1997), was strengthened by the fact that post-Conquest patronage was being

driven by locally defined social pressures and necessities, and carried out by people who were resident in the area, rather than those whose power bases lay elsewhere. These lords were making decisions based on values that were established with reference to particulars of the region's history and character, and which were further defined not just by events at the national level, but by the peers with whom they were in close and frequent contact and competition.

John le Patourel, in one of the earliest studies of the Norman Conquest in the north, sagely noted that it should be remembered that the Conquest was not something that 'happened', but 'something that the Normans did' (Le Patourel 1971, 17). His recognition of the importance of human agency in the process of conquest, even if not explicitly theoretically expressed, was well before its time. However, socio-political transitions are never one-sided impositions, but are rather protracted and complex negotiations between all participants. The evidence from northern England demonstrates that the native populace – both through their creation of a well-defined regional pre-Conquest culture, as well as through their activities and contributions to material culture in the post-Conquest period – 'did' as much as the Normans to author the eventual outcome. This was true in any part of England, not just in the north. But in the north, the turbulent nature of the early years of transition, the tenuousness of centralised control, the threats of rebellion and invasion, the idiosyncrasies of tenurial organisation, the topography and landscape, and even the strength of pre-Conquest material traditions such as commemorative stone carving all combined to create a scenario in which the Normans were forced to adapt and negotiate their intentions and actions in a way that was distinct to the region. The precarious balance between the present and the past may have been particularly relevant in northern England, where centralised control was tenuous and Norman-native interactions were more likely to be complicated and less well regulated.

This study of churches and commemoration has demonstrated that future archaeological research agendas for the Norman Conquest should not revolve around documented events and named personages, because it was not solely the king, the overlords and the national elite who carried out the process of transition. Rather, it was the subtenants and minor elite, in close contact with the materials and realities of manorial life, who oversaw considerable parts of the day-to-day give-and-take which was the real driver of the transformation from an Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian to an Anglo-Norman world. It was also they, rather than their overlords, who contributed to the creation of an Anglo-Norman northern identity which deliberately incorporated aspects of the past in its material culture. While there was not necessarily a homogeneous regional identity that extended to every resident of the post-Conquest north, there were certain regional trends and a vocabulary of meaning and shared past that was understood not only by the native inhabitants of the north, but was quickly engaged with by the conquerors as well.

This chapter offers a new and more detailed picture of the realities of post-Conquest economy, society and material culture in northern England than has previously been recognised, but its implications are also profoundly wider in scope. The evidence presented here demonstrates that it is essential to understand regional and local processes if we are to create more nuanced and detailed interpretations of events which are usually characterised

at much larger scales. It will hopefully spur the examination of other regional and local dimensions of the Conquest, all of which were essential parts of the Normans' success in their English and European endeavours. Finally, by highlighting the value of a theoretically informed, regional archaeological study, this chapter provides a template for future socially and geographically particularised and contextualised considerations of not only the Norman Conquest, but also other well-documented 'national' and 'international' events.

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